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# National Institute of Justice

## S o l i c i t a t i o n

*Sarah V. Hart, Director*

*September 2002*

## **Solicitation for the Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative**

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:  
November 25, 2002**

**U.S. Department of Justice**  
**Office of Justice Programs**  
810 Seventh Street N.W.  
Washington, DC 20531

**John Ashcroft**  
*Attorney General*

**Deborah J. Daniels**  
*Assistant Attorney General*

**Sarah V. Hart**  
*Director, National Institute of Justice*

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For grant and funding information, contact:  
**Department of Justice Response Center**  
800-421-6770

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**Office of Justice Programs**  
**World Wide Web Site:**  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>

**National Institute of Justice**  
**World Wide Web Site:**  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>

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# Evaluation of the Reentry Initiative

## I. Introduction

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and the National Institute of Corrections, two agencies within the U.S. Department of Justice, have recently released a solicitation for the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative through a collaboration with and support from the U.S. Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Housing and Urban Development (the Federal Partners). The Reentry Solicitation focused on the problem of the increasing numbers of offenders who are “Going Home” after being incarcerated in prisons, jails, or training schools, and then further victimize their communities and return to custody.

The purpose of this solicitation is to seek applications for a grant to evaluate programs receiving funding under the Reentry Solicitation. Specifically, this solicitation seeks to award funding to measure the costs and impacts of programs that receive funding under the Initiative. The proposed project period should not exceed five years, including an implementation/process evaluation phase of up to one year at the beginning of the project and ninety days at the end for NIJ review and revision of final products.

The research will be conducted at approximately ten sites selected from the total of 68 which received funding under the Initiative (a complete listing and brief description of each program is available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/reentry>). Current plans also allow for additional research sites to be selected by the Federal Partners, subject to the availability of funding, in response to requests by program recipients to be included in the research.

Applicants should study the original Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative solicitation,

also available on the OJP reentry Web site, and have a clear understanding of the goals of the Initiative.

## II. Background

The goal of the Reentry Initiative is to increase public safety by reducing recidivism among juvenile and adult offender populations. In doing so, it seeks to build on recent efforts of state and local organizations or agencies to find solutions that will aid the transition of offenders back into their communities. The Initiative allows funding to be used in one of two ways, either to fill gaps in an existing, comprehensive reentry program or to contribute to the development and funding of a comprehensive reentry program.

Each site for the evaluation of the Initiative will be selected on the basis of their comprehensive reentry program, not simply those components which received Federal support. The Reentry Solicitation details the responsibilities of the grantees in assisting and supporting the evaluation efforts and applicants should develop their proposals to this solicitation with this in mind.

The research proposed under this solicitation must use both a sample of offenders who participated in one of these comprehensive reentry programs and a comparison group. Participants must be followed through the program and for up to two years following their exit from the program, either through graduation or termination, while comparison subjects should be followed for the equivalent time period.

Funding will be awarded in two phases to allow initial support for an implementation/process evaluation phase to hire staff, expand institutional capacity, select sites, establish

access, and begin process studies. Throughout this implementation period the grantee will work in close collaboration with the sites, NIJ, and the other Federal partners in the reentry initiative to finalize the research design, resolve measurement issues, and develop data collection instruments.

The total level of funding for this project has not been determined. A budget for the entire ten site project appropriate for an evaluation of this scale should be proposed by the applicant with a breakdown for the two phases separately. Costs for the second phase will be estimates; these can be adjusted when the revised budget, based on the known sites for the study, is submitted in the second year of the project. Approvals for the drawdown of funds for later years of the project will be contingent on the finalization of the research plan and budget.

Funding under this solicitation may be awarded to a single research agency or to a collaborative effort between agencies. NIJ encourages researchers from all disciplines to explore opportunities for such collaborations. If a collaborative effort is proposed, the application should provide a management plan identifying which agency will be the primary grantee responsible for overseeing the entire project and include a detailed outline of the responsibilities of each participating agency. The budgets for each agency should be combined to show the total expenditures for the project on the Budget Detail Worksheet. The budgets for each separate collaborating agency should be shown in the budget narrative.

### **III. Partnerships Encouraged**

NIJ strongly encourages partnerships between researchers from various fields, beyond criminal justice, and practitioners during all phases of research projects. Proposals should include plans for the formation of a standing panel of subject matter experts with experience in criminal justice, employment, education, or housing to

provide ongoing advice to the project. One of the primary roles of this panel will be to assist the project in defining issues of greatest interest to the field. Proposals should also include concrete plans for the dissemination of research results to practitioners. Periodic presentations to the Federal Partners at critical times in the evaluation should also be planned.

Among the products expected from the research funded under this solicitation, in addition to any research reports issued by the agency or through peer reviewed journals, will be a series of brief topical reports or research bulletins on selected subjects (e.g. employment, mental health, substance abuse, education, housing, recidivism, and distance from crime). These reports should be designed for policy and practitioner audiences and be clear, concise, and readable. Applications should provide for editorial staff in their budget plans to assist in the preparation of these products.

### **IV. Areas of Research Required**

The research design for the project proposed under this solicitation should include plans for the selection of approximately ten of the comprehensive reentry programs receiving funding under the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative. The focus of the research will be to determine whether the selected programs have accomplished the overall goal of the Reentry Initiative—increasing public safety by reducing recidivism among the populations served by that program—and determining the relative costs and benefits of the program.

The sites will be selected in consultation with NIJ and the other Federal Partners during the implementation phase of the project. At each selected site, samples of offenders participating in the reentry program will be selected and tracked. Program participants will be followed through their entire experience with the program and for up to two years.

A comparison group of offenders who do not participate in the program will also be identified and followed for the equivalent time period. In some cases, a program may cover all returning offenders in a jurisdiction and comparison subjects may have to be drawn from a similar jurisdiction. In any case, the most rigorous possible designs, whether experimental or quasi-experimental, are encouraged and should be proposed whenever feasible.

Data will be collected from interviews with offenders, from official records, and from the programs. The interviews with offenders will target the standard set of demographic and social background, criminal history, alcohol and other drug use histories, workforce participation, education, and offense characteristics.

Relevant outcomes measured from the program or official records, program staff, and participants' self-reports should include program success or expulsion, recidivism for a new offense, revocation of probation, substance abuse, and other social, educational and vocational adjustment measures. Multiple outcome measures in more than one life domain, as appropriate, should be included in any proposed research design. Examples of such measures include:

- Participation in educational programs or vocational training; program completion, degrees, diploma or equivalent, certificates earned; and ratings of success, grades, or scores on certification tests.
- Employment and job retention; economic self-sufficiency; UI wage records, and measures of work performance.
- Participation in substance abuse treatment; program continuation or graduation; measures of program success; drug test results; and relapse.
- Participation in mental health programs or receiving counseling; adherence to treatment plans, including medications; and measures of psychological adjustment.
- Stable housing and living arrangements; financial support for family, including child support; measures of economic well being; and success in meeting financial obligations.
- Stable social relationships; community participation or other social activities; and avoidance of criminal associates or gang involvement.

Process measures, such as descriptive information of programs and their context, should be included in the research design if they have the potential to help explain outcomes. Because the intent of this solicitation is to test the impact of these programs, proposed process measures should be related to the multiple measures of outcomes. Applications that propose studies of only the process of implementation or program operations, without any outcome measures, will not be considered under this solicitation.

Applicants should discuss in detail their institutional capacities to manage a data collection effort involving multiple sites and repeated measures. They should also describe staff expertise in all of the areas of study, including employment, education, housing and criminal justice.

Proposals should include discussions of quality control methods and plans for tracking subjects in both the participant and comparison groups. A performance goal under this project will be the maintenance of at least a 75% response rate in the first year of the follow-up periods and at least a 60% response rate during the second year.

Applicants should anticipate and suggest strategies for addressing problems of data

analysis typical of studies of this type. Proposals should discuss plans for dealing with missing data, attrition, selection bias, and other threats to validity. Proposals under this solicitation should also include an outline for the eventual analysis of the data, including plans for some form of survival analyses.

As noted above, applicants should build into their plans an implementation phase of up to one year to expand institutional capacity, select the sites, establish access, assist the selected sites in developing the ability to collect the required data and do an initial process study. NIJ and the Federal Partners will be actively involved in this phase of the project and progress will be carefully monitored.

## V. Selection Criteria

NIJ is firmly committed to a competitive process in making grant awards. External peer review panels will consider both technical and programmatic merits of a proposed topic. Successful applicants must demonstrate to an independent peer review panel that: 1) the proposed project is responsive to all of the required areas of research, as defined in Section IV above, will produce knowledge directly relevant to policy at the national level, and can enhance our understanding of crime and the challenges of the transition to the community; 2) the proposed research design is rigorous and appropriate to posited research questions; and, 3) principal investigators are highly qualified and have the institutional capacity to execute a national, longitudinal study of the scale required by this solicitation.

Following the review by the peer panel, NIJ staff will make recommendations to the Director based on the results of those reviews and internal deliberations. Final decisions are made by the NIJ Director. Reviews of grant applications are based upon the following criteria:

### ■ Impact of the Project

- Relevance to informing the policy and practice of reentry and the criminal justice system generally for improving public safety, security, and quality of life;
- Potential for significant advances of understanding in areas such the management of reentering offenders, the operation of transition programs, and crime prevention;
- Plans for the use of subject matter experts to assist in the dissemination of brief topical reports or research bulletins designed for policy and practitioner audiences.

### ■ Quality and Technical Merit

- Awareness of existing research literature and relevant theoretical perspectives on reentry, recidivism and desistance of criminal careers;
- Soundness of methodology, analytic, or technical approach;
- Innovativeness and creativity in the treatment of the research topic or methodology;
- Feasibility of proposed project, awareness of potential problems, and suggested solutions.

### ■ Capabilities, Demonstrated Productivity, and Experience of Applicants

- Qualifications and experience of personnel to proposed project;
- The involvement of a multi-disciplinary staff with expertise in all the areas of interest in the project;
- Demonstrated institutional capacity to carry out a multi-site study on a national scale;
- Demonstrated ability to manage the proposed effort;

- Adequacy of proposed budget including time and personnel;
  - Past performance on sponsored research grants and contracts.
- **Budget Considerations**
- Total cost relative to perceived benefit;
  - Budget appropriate to level of effort.

The review process (including peer review, decision-making and other considerations) may take up to two months to complete. Notices of award and non-award are distributed simultaneously no later than 90 days subsequent to the closing date of a solicitation. Notifications will be sent to the address as indicated on the Application for Assistance. Information regarding award status will not be available until notifications are distributed.

## VI. How to Apply

Individuals interested in submitting proposals in response to this solicitation must complete the required application forms and related documents. Applicants must include all of the following information and completed forms in order to qualify for consideration. Applicants should follow the page limit and format guidelines and include each of the items in the order they are listed below:

### **PART A:**

- Application for Federal Assistance - Standard Form (SF 424)
- Proposal abstract
- Table of contents
- Budget Detail Worksheet
- Budget Narrative
- Negotiated indirect rate agreement (if appropriate)
- Program narrative
- Bibliography

- Names and affiliations of all key persons including applicants and subcontractor(s), advisors, consultants, and advisory board members. Include name of principal investigator, title, organizational affiliation, department (if institution of higher education), address, phone, fax, and e-mail address.
- List all previous and current Federal awards and grant numbers including information on final reports and other deliverables (whether submitted or outstanding) and a listing of all publications resulting from each grant award.

### **PART B:**

- Privacy certificate
- Protection of Human Subjects Assurance Identification/Certification/Declaration (Form 310)
- Environmental Assessment (if required)
- Geographic Areas Affected Worksheet
- Assurances
- Certifications Regarding Lobbying, Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (one form)
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- Letters of cooperation from organizations collaborating in the research project
- Résumés (limit lists of publications, presentations, and projects to those relevant to the topic of the proposal)
- Other materials necessary for the evaluation of the proposal

**The Application Package** is available at the NIJ Web site under the URL:

[http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding\\_app.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding_app.htm)

**The Application for Assistance.** The Standard Form 424 should be the first page of the application. Please follow the instructions in

completing the Standard Application for Assistance Form.

In item 10 of the Application, be sure to include 16.560 as the Catalog for Federal Domestic Assistance Number. Indicate the Title to be the “Solicitation for the Evaluation of Serious and Violent Offenders.”

Enter the title descriptive of your project in Item 11. Start and end dates in Item 13 should be adjusted to accommodate up to three months to review the proposals and process awards. For this solicitation, proposed projects should have a start date no earlier than **February 28, 2003**.

**The Proposal Abstract.** A 400-word proposal abstract should be the second page of the application package and concisely describe research objectives, design, and methodology. If an award is made, the abstract is computerized and serves as a publically available summary of the project for the duration of the grant. The abstract should clearly state the objectives of the proposed research project and its anticipated relevance to criminal justice policy and practice.

The abstract should be a succinct description of the proposed work and briefly describe the research design and methodology, data collection procedures and instrumentation, and other methods or procedures unique to the proposed study. The abstract should also note proposed techniques for data analysis and expected products including interim and final reports, instrumentation, and data to be archived under NIJ’s Data Resource Program. Use the following two headers and instructions in developing the abstract.

### ***Research Goals and Objectives:***

**Statement of Purpose.** State the problem under investigation including goals and objectives of the proposed research project, and anticipated relevance of the project to public policy and/or practice.

**Research Subjects.** If applicable, describe subjects who will be involved in the proposed project including the number of participants, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and other pertinent characteristics such as how you will gain access to participants.

### ***Proposed Research Design & Methodology:***

**Methods.** Describe the research method and/or design including data to be used in addressing research questions, data collection procedures and instrumentation, access to data, and other methods or procedures unique to the proposed study.

**Data Analysis and Products.** Describe proposed techniques for data analysis and all expected products including interim and final reports, instrumentation, and data to be archived under NIJ’s Data Resource Program.

**The Program Narrative.** The program narrative should provide information and detail to adequately describe the proposed project and should include:

- Purpose, Goals and Objectives
- Brief Review of Relevant Literature
- Methodology
- Anticipated Results and Products
- Staff/Management Plan
- *Tables, Charts, Figures & Research Time -line (not within page limit)*

**Page limit.** The number of pages included in the “Program Narrative” section of the application must not exceed thirty (30), double-spaced pages in 12-point font, with one inch margins. Tables, charts and figures describing the research design, calendar, analysis plan, etc. are encouraged and will not be counted in the page limitation.

**Due date.** Ten (10) copies (at least one unbound) of complete proposals **must be received** at the National Institute of Justice by 4:30 p.m.



**November 25, 2002.** No extension of this deadline will be granted. Faxed or electronically transmitted copies are not accepted. NIJ reserves the right to return incomplete applications, those not responsive to the scope of this solicitation, or those not complying with format requirements.

Names and affiliations of the author(s) of the proposal should be clearly identified. Proposals that are incorrectly collated, incomplete, or handwritten may be considered as submitted or, at NIJ's discretion, may be returned without further review. Proposals exceeding the page limit will not be reviewed. No additions to the original submission are allowed.

**Application Materials.** Applicants should obtain two packets: 1) application forms (including a sample budget worksheet); and, 2) guidelines for submitting proposals (including requirements for proposal writers and requirements for grant recipients). To receive them, applicants can:

- Access NIJ Web site and download application information at:

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>

- Request hard copies of the forms and guidelines by mail from the NCJRS at 800-851-3420 or from the Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770 (in the Washington, D.C., area, at 202-307-1480).
- Request copies by fax. Call 800-851-3420 and select option 1, then option 1 again for NIJ. Code is 1023.

Please note that instructions provided in this announcement supersede those outlined in the document: *Guidelines for Submitting Proposals for National Institute of Justice - Sponsored Research*.

## IV. Performance Guidelines

To ensure compliance with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), Public Law 103-62, this solicitation notifies successful applicants that they will be required to collect and report information and data that measure the results of the grant. In order to ensure accountability, the following performance standards are established for all NIJ grantees under this solicitation.

Grantees should use plain English in writing funding proposals and all grant products. (see <http://www.plainlanguage.gov> for assistance). However, we recognize that descriptions of research methodologies may necessarily involve some technical information. The grantee should put this technical information in context for the non-researcher.

### Research & Evaluation Performance Standards

Grantees are required to submit in draft form the following deliverables ninety (90) days before the grant end date:

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### Deliverables Required 90 Days Before the Grant End Date

- Abstract (400 words)
- Executive Summary (2,500 words)
- Research Report
- Electronic data and supporting documentation capable of being re-analyzed and used by other researchers

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All NIJ draft research reports are peer reviewed upon submission. The reviews are forwarded to the principal investigator with suggestions for revisions. The principal investigator is then required to submit the revised final report, abstract, executive summary, final data set and codebook/data dictionary by the end date of the grant. The abstract, executive summary and final report are to be submitted in both paper and

electronic/diskette versions. The data set and codebook/dictionary are also to be submitted in electronic form.

Data sets must be received by the grant end date. Grant applicants should ensure that the proposed time line and budget accommodates these requirements.

In addition to the abstract, executive summary, research report and data set, grantees are required to submit financial status reports and progress reports.

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## Other Required Reports

- Quarterly financial status reports (Standard Form 269-A)
- Final financial status report (Standard Form 269-A)
- Semi-annual Categorical Assistance Progress Reports (OJP Form 4587)
- Final Categorical Assistance Progress Report (OJP Form 4587)

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## Financial Status Reports

Financial status reports (SF 269-A) are to be submitted quarterly no later than 45 days following the end of each calendar quarter. Two copies of the financial status report must be submitted to the Office of the Comptroller every quarter during which the award is active even if there has been no financial activity during the reporting period.

Additionally, a final financial report is due 120 days after the end date of the award. Future awards and fund drawdowns will be withheld if financial status reports are delinquent.

## Progress Reports

Recipients of funding are also required to submit semi-annual Categorical Assistance Progress Reports (OJP Form 4587). Two copies of the progress report must be submitted to the Office of

the Comptroller twice a year even if there has been no substantive activity during the reporting period. The progress report should describe activities during the reporting period and status or accomplishment of objectives as set forth in the approved application for funding. For the duration of the award, progress reports must be submitted within 30 days after the end of the reporting periods (January 1 through June 30 and July 1 through December 31).

Additionally, a Final Progress Report providing a summary of achievement of the goals and objectives of the award, significant results, and any products developed under the award, is due 90 days after the end date of the award. Future awards and fund drawdowns may be withheld if progress reports are delinquent.

Forms for submitting financial and progress reports are available at the NIJ Web site. Report formats will also be provided by the Office of Justice Programs at the time of the grant award.

This information will facilitate future program planning and/or research efforts and will allow OJP to provide the Congress and others with measurable results of its grants.

## Research Report

The final research report, due in draft form 90 days prior to the end of the grant, should provide a comprehensive overview of the study and should include a detailed description of the research design, data, and methods, a full presentation of scientific findings, and a thorough discussion of the implications of the research findings for criminal justice practice and policy.

## Evaluation Report

For *evaluation* studies, the research report should also include a section on **Measuring Program Performance**. This section should outline the measures used to evaluate program effectiveness, modifications made to those measures as a result of the evaluation, and recommendations regarding

these and other potential performance measures for similar programs. (This information will be particularly valuable to NIJ and other federal program agencies in implementing performance measures for federally funded criminal justice programs.)

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### **CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION AND HUMAN SUBJECT PROTECTION**

NIJ has adopted new policies and procedures regarding the confidentiality of information and human subjects protection.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) regulations at 28 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 22 require recipients of NIJ research funds to protect personally identifiable information that is collected from all research participants. The regulations at 28 CFR Part 22 require applicants for NIJ funding to outline specific procedures for protection of private information about individuals as part of the Privacy Certificate submitted with the application package.

In addition to the regulations in Part 22, DOJ has adopted policies concerning protection of human subjects which are the same as those established by the Department of Health and Human Services in 45 CFR Part 46, Subpart A, also known as the "Common Rule."

The DOJ regulations are set forth in 28 CFR Part 46. In general, 28 CFR Part 46 requires that all research involving human subjects conducted or supported by a federal department or agency be reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) before federal funds are expended for that research. If IRB approval is required for this project, a copy of the IRB's approval as well as supporting documentation concerning the IRB's institutional affiliation, its policies and procedures, and necessary assurances must be submitted to the National Institute of Justice prior to the initiation of any research activities that are not exempt from the provisions of 28 CFR Part 46.

Further information regarding Confidentiality and Human Subjects Protections may be found in *Guidelines for Submitting Proposals for National Institute of Justice-Sponsored Research*.

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**Guidance and information.** Applicants who wish to receive additional guidance and information may contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770. Center staff can provide assistance or refer applicants to an appropriate NIJ professional.

### **Send completed forms to:**

The Solicitation for the Evaluation of Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative  
National Institute of Justice  
810 Seventh Street N.W., Room 7324  
Washington, DC 20531

NIJ recommends the use of an overnight courier service (use ZIP Code 20001) or hand delivery for the submission of applications, which are due by 4:30 p.m. **November 25, 2002.**

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**SL 000578**

For more information on the National Institute of Justice, please contact:

**National Criminal Justice Reference Service**

Box 6000

Rockville, MD 20849-6000

800-851-3420

e-mail: [askncjrs@ncjrs.org](mailto:askncjrs@ncjrs.org)

You can view or obtain an electronic version of this document from the NCJRS Justice Information Center Web site (<http://www.ncjrs.org>) or the NIJ Web site (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>).

If you have any questions, call or e-mail NCJRS.